

THE FRENCH ADMINISTRATION OF INDO-CHINA

vinced were they and the Metropole of the gulf between them, that a totally different administration was evolved for the two countries. At one time France even contemplated sacrificing Annam to keep Tonkin. But this project was nipped in the bud by the realization that some foreign Power could drive a wedge between the two French colonies of the peninsula, and that an independent Hue would always stir up trouble in Tonkin. For many years this initial error kept the French from appreciating the cultural unity of the three Annamite countries, and they tried by different administrative methods to sunder what history had knit together throughout twenty centuries of common editions.

In the new-born Protectorate of Annam-Tonkin, it was soon obvious that the storm centre would be Hue. Tu-Duc died in July 1883, but the course of the Protectorate ran no smoother for the death of its most implacable enemy. His demise, rather, opened the way to the mandarin-Scholar party, who, thanks to a series of ephemeral emperors, were soon able to dominate the situation. The Bac-Le episode was to his group the joyous confirmation of French impotence, so they proceeded to crown and depose monarchs without even consulting the French Resident Consul. Finally a French battalion had to be called in to reduce the Scholar party to a humbler state of mind. It was hoped that this advantage would be permanently confirmed by the stationing of French troops in the Hue citadel.

Temporarily thwarted at the capital, the Scholars turned their activities to the provinces. There their venom was exercised principally upon the native Christians, for, said they picturesquely, without

hem the French would be like crabs without claws.
 Throughout
 1883-84 only the vigilance of the French kept these
 reprisals from
 materializing. The situation was still fundamentally the
 same when
 General de Courcy took over the command, in June 1885.
 De Courcy's incompetence and foolhardy behaviour
 precipitated the
 scholars' long-maturing plans for a general massacre
 of the French
 and of their Christian supporters. This attack failed,
 but due to no
 foresight on the part of De Courcy. The Regent Thuyet
 fled to the
 mountains, taking with him the twelve-year-old
 Emperor, Ham Nghi.
 Since the Protectorate needed a sovereign to protect,
 the French at
 once cast about for some harmless substitute. Their
 choice finally fell
 on Dong Khanh, brother to the Emperor-in-flight. The
 Comat was
 next reconstituted with more obliging Ministers.
 Popular resentment
 of this policy was shown by the outbreak of a general
 revolt, which